

FORREST LAKE TOWNHOMES



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 6

Paula Williamson, Editor (FLNewsletter@yahoo.com)

July 23, 2010

The Work of the Forrest Lake Board

Ken Barker

Several residents have commented that management of Forrest Lake has many of the same characteristics as a business (albeit a "not for profit" one). And, with its 22 acres, 2 miles of private roads, driveways, and footpaths, an annual budget moving fast towards the million dollar mark, 6 employees, a bunch of very essential service contracts, and (not least) 243 shareholders that is all very true. So how are we effectively managing this business?

Over the last 8 years your Board has had two primary goals in everything that it has done:

1. Maintain, and if possible improve, the values of individual properties
2. Preserve and protect the lifestyle and security of the residents in our community.

So what progress has been made towards achieving these two objectives in the tough economic times and fast changing social conditions that now apply?

In the next Newsletter we will commenting on a number of programs the Board has successfully initiated or accomplished, and the impact that these have had on the life of our community. In this task we stress that the actions taken did not result from just a two hour board meeting once a month, but from the many many hours of painstaking detail work by individual Board members each week to investigate, plan, and facilitate the desired actions and results. All of this work is not like a war that can be fought and won so that we can all then go home, but a never ending series of battles to address fast changing local conditions and emerging potential problems. Most of this work by the Board never reaches the eyes and ears of the bulk of our residents but it is absolutely essential to the well being and survival of our community. We see many sad examples of the deterioration of communities in our area who have failed to address similar problems.



Important Phone Numbers

Office Manager (<i>Cheryl</i>)	713-681-3591
Property Manager (<i>Pokey</i>)	713-956-6236
Security	713-201-5656
Emergency (Life Threatening)	911
Houston Police Dept. (non-emergency)	713-884-3131
City of Houston (Loose dog pickup)	713-222-3501

Board Members:

Earline Soteras	713-688-3730
Ken Barker	713-681-1115
Elva Bryant	713-688-5807
Stephanie Rush	713-812-1080
Bob Wharton	713-680-8377

Maintenance (for after-hours appointments)

Francisco	713-409-4820
Willie	713-828-2428
Nahun	713-202-7148
Omar	713-818-4738

Neighborhood News:

- **Linda Carroll** and **George Schanz** just returned from a great vacation to Cabo San Lucas where they stayed in a swanky condominium with friends.
- **Toni Troxell** attended the grand opening of Jimmy Buffet's new Hotel Margaritaville in Pensacola. The good news as a result of Toni's trip: she found out that her son is not being sent to Afghanistan after all!
- Condolences to **Mary Bird** upon the loss of her step-son, Bob Bird. He died with stomach cancer.
- Continued prayers are being said for **Tommye Barker** as she is recuperating from surgery and beginning new treatment.
- **Marga Oliver** and **Paula Williamson** went with another friend to Galveston for the day. Yes, Paula actually woke up early enough to leave at 9:00 a.m.! While in Galveston, they viewed the tree carvings and had a delightful lunch at The Mosquito Café.
- Welcome, **Phillip Turner**, our new security guard, who together with Garner will cover the security duties at Forrest Lake.



FYI:

Earline Soteras

- Our sincere thanks to **Mrs. Curlie Jackson** for her most generous gifts of spotlights and cases of Coca Cola to the security guards and our maintenance crew.
- We had a resident who informed our security guard, **Garner**, that he did not think the pumps were working after a rainstorm. Garner immediately called **Willie Rodriguez**, our assistant maintenance manager, who came in and took care of the problem. Willie did all the repairs required and saved Forrest Lake a replacement bill of \$14,000. How's that for having in-house maintenance!!! A big thank you for residents who are observant and report incidents.
- Last week we had a sewer leak develop and our people repaired it for a cost of \$250. If a plumbing company had been called, it would have been a minimum of \$2,000.
- Because of the rain we have been having lately, the pool has developed algae in the deep end that requires extra treatment. This may result in the pool being closed an extra day when required.

Security Corner

Ken Barker

As a good example of the duties your Board members perform on a regular basis is our participation in the monthly security meetings of the Near Northwest Management District (NNMD). These gatherings allow apartment managers and Home Owner's Associations (HOAs) to exchange information with members of local law enforcement organizations who patrol our area and they have always been a useful aid to our own security planning. **The news is not good!**

The Precinct One deputies present at the recent meeting advised that local crime is increasing and its character changing. Juvenile gangs in particular are still expanding their activities and drug related traffic is becoming the major driving force in our area. This is not unique to our neighborhood, and all parts of the City are experiencing similar trends. The staffing problems of HPD and other local crime prevention forces exacerbate the situation and are stressing response resources. The elimination of defunct and crime ridden apartments in the DeSoto area (less than a mile from Forrest Lake) is proceeding, but at a snail's pace. Legal objections and unidentifiable out-of-state owners are the major factors for the delay. Crime and gang presence is also migrating and extending to other parts of the Antoine corridor and also to Tidwell.

Of particular significance to Forrest Lake is the purchase by currently unknown parties of the Luxor and Rancho Verde apartment complexes that are situated directly across Tidwell from Forrest Lake. Due to the current economic conditions the leasing levels for these apartments, also many others in the area, are very low. We were already aware that the new owner had cut back on a variety of social and service programs, including youth activities, and security in his newly acquired property. But, in addition he has let it be known that he will attract new tenants by using very competitive rents and easy leasing terms, including low criminal background screening checks. No prizes for guessing the type of people he will attract as a result of these policies.

It is certain that these actions will lead to an increase in criminal elements living close to us, so in the future we will be paying even closer attention to the selection and performance of our security officers. They are our first line of defense against walk-ins and other activities that are so often the prelude to criminal acts. I am working with ABM Security to ensure that we have proactive and highly motivated officers assigned to Forrest Lake and the security of our community remains at a high level. I have also been working with the crime prevention officer from the Precinct One Deputies organization, assigned to NNMD, on an audit of the current security situation in Forrest Lake and he has already made several useful suggestions.



FINANCIAL NEWS

Ken Barker

Due to the earlier publishing of the Newsletter, many of the current financial numbers for the first nine months of our fiscal year 2010 will not be available until after July 31, 2010. I am expecting that our Year to Date (YTD) results will continue to show a small month to month improvement but this is due to cash-flow variations and timing, and the fact remains that many of the costs of services, supplies and materials we require to keep Forrest Lake's 37 year old infrastructure operating continue to rise. In most cases we have no alternative but to pay. City water and sewer rates are a good example of this. So, for this Financial report I am focusing on another important task and that is the formulation of the annual budget for Fiscal Year 2011 (November 1, 2010 – October 30, 2011).

This budgeting exercise requires the participation of all Board members and key FL employees, and takes many weeks of painstaking analysis of current cost center information, future trends, and community needs. Most FL residents are aware, I think, that each Board member has a defined responsibility for monitoring the activities and related costs in specific sectors of FL operations. This ongoing exercise requires each of them to review their sector items in detail and to make appropriate changes, or initiate actions, as required. Many hours are spent

by Board members on these exercises each month and sometimes every day. At budget preparation time this activity increases substantially. We are fortunate that our Board comprises of so many able individuals with considerable business and management experience and their skills are utilized extensively and continually.

Beginning in early June each Board member is required to submit their estimates for costs of the next fiscal year's activity in the cost centers that are their responsibility. Their individual forecasts are incorporated into one draft budget by the Treasurer (Ken Barker) and anomalies are targeted and addressed. By the middle of July a draft budget for the next fiscal year is then formalized and approved by the Board for action. This budget then goes to an independent Audit Committee for their review, questions, and comment. I will have more to say on the work of the Audit Committee in the next Newsletter.

Last year we published in the Newsletter an article entitled "Where does your money go?" This explained what use was made of each dollar of your maintenance fee. Given the difficult economic times that all Americans currently experiencing I thought that it might be useful to publish an updated version of this. To avoid giving everyone "reader's cramp" I will leave this to be shown as a separate article.

FORREST LAKE TOWNHOUSE ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES June 24, 2010

Present: Ken Barker, Earline Soteras, Elva Bryant, Stephanie Rush, and Bob Wharton

Earline Soteras called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Minutes of the May meeting were approved.

Treasurer: There is an YTD loss of \$30,317. The majority stems from the nonpayment of maintenance fees by homes in foreclosure. Below is the breakdown:

	<u>Budget YTD</u> 5/30/10	<u>Actual YTD</u> 5/30/10
<u>Total Income</u>	\$519,604	\$518,724
<u>Total Expense</u>	\$503,679	\$505,021
Net Surplus		
<u>Before Appropriations</u>	\$ 15,925	\$ 3,703
<u>Total Appropriations</u>	\$ 34,020	\$ 34,020
Surplus to General Fund	\$(18,095)	\$(30,317)

Budget numbers for the next fiscal year are due from the members by 6/30/10.

Maintenance: Repairs to the backs of three buildings have been completed. Two homeowners did not leave their gates unlocked, so repairs were not done.

Landscape: Landscapers are currently working on the planters. A totals review of the sprinkler system will be done to ensure that it is working correctly.

Security: During the past month, HPD was called twice to one home due to problems. A Deputy with Precinct 1 will make a visit to Forrest Lake to review our security system. This assistance is provided by our connection with the Near Northwest Association.

Old Business: Our current bad debt totaling \$15,600 was generated for the most part from seven homes in foreclosure.

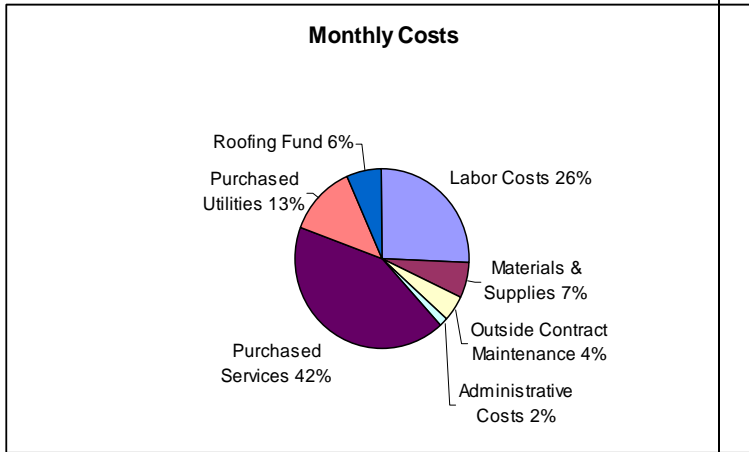
New Business: We will be taking bids on our trash services. The current contract expires on 9/30/2010.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Wharton, Secretary

How is the money being spent in Fiscal 2010?



2010 Administrative Costs

\$14,465 \$4.96/per townhouse per month

These costs include:

- Office Supplies and Equipment
- Bank charges
- Telephone
- Postage
- Printing
- Support of social activities
- Club house keeping and cleaning
- Property promotional activities

2010 Purchased Services

\$387,565 \$132.91/per townhouse per month

These costs include:

- Trash removal
- Grounds Landscaping and maintenance
- Contract Security
- Termite control
- Accounting Services
- Cable TV (Comcast)
- Legal services
- Property and Liability Insurance

2010 Purchased Utilities

\$121,800 \$41.77/per townhouse per month

These costs include:

- Water and Sewer
- Electric power

2010 Roofing Fund

\$58,320 \$20.00/per townhouse per month

These costs include:

- Reroofing of all townhouses approximately every 12-15 years



Kudos to Ken Barker

...for spending countless hours of his own time representing Forrest Lake at community meetings such as the Near Northwest Management District. He attends monthly meetings and also attends security committee meetings in order that Forrest Lake will be represented and knowledgeable about events and issues in our community.

Reminder About Our Website: www.forrestlake.com

To view the newsletter in color and save pictures, go to the Forrest Lake website, www.forrestlake.com. You may also find bylaws and other information on the website. Bookmark it and return to read it each month. **Ollie Perry**, former FL resident and Board member, is our webmaster and he does a great job of keeping it up to date for us!

How is the maintenance fee that we pay each month used? Last year I wrote an article for the Newsletter that provided some details on this subject and I thought that it might be useful to repeat an updated version of this for the current financial year. So here is a breakdown of our budgeted costs in Fiscal Year 2010 (which runs from Nov.1 2009 thru Oct. 31, 2010). In each case we show the yearly cost for each major cost category, how much this translates per townhouse per month, and what items it covers.

2010 Labor costs

\$237,635 \$81.49/per townhouse per month

These costs include:

- Payroll taxes (Federal tax)
- Labor and salary costs (6 employees)
- Limited health insurance
- Payroll services (pay checks and tax statements)
- Workman's compensation insurance (Federal Tax)

2010 Materials and supplies

\$60,235 \$20.66/per townhouse per month

These costs include:

- Supplies for the upkeep of the landscaping and grounds.
- Consumable supplies and maintenance of equipment for Security
- Reimbursement of gas mileage for employees involved in collection of supplies
- Building supplies and equipment required for maintenance of common facilities and exteriors of individual properties.

2010 Outside contract Maintenance

\$40,950 \$14.04/per townhouse per month

Sometimes it is necessary to bring in specialized outside services or equipment for special jobs.

These costs include:

- Concrete repairs
- Tree removal
- Plumbing and sewer repairs
- Roofing special repairs
- Electrical services
- Air conditioning repairs and services
- Pool repairs
- Special remodeling repairs

Editorial

I want to take this opportunity to thank those of you who read the newsletter and take time to contribute articles, letters, and other bits of information. For those who may not know, the newsletter is not run or censored by the Board. I started publishing this in 2003 as a means of communication for the residents in Forrest Lake. Anyone, including members of the Board, is welcome to submit information. Board members take the opportunity to share information regarding security, finance, minutes of board meetings, maintenance, and landscape through this forum. I applaud their willingness to do this so that we can be informed. I am solely responsible for selecting what is and is not printed. I also reserve the right to "edit" letters in regards to length, content, spelling, etc. and will not print one that is not signed or one that is slanderous or hurtful toward someone else.

Paula Williamson

Letters to the Editor:

July 1, 2010

Dear Editor,

I hate to see letters like the one from Ron Watts. I appreciate our maintenance guys, especially Frank, who helps me so much and our security, especially Garner. I know I can call Garner anytime I have a problem or need a little help. He carries heavy items for me, helps me with my car, watches out for my niece when she walks the dog or goes to the pool, and he watches my house. He knows the regular cars that come here and he knows my routine. Any deviation will have Garner knocking on my door to see if everything is alright. I appreciate his security; I feel safe. We have lost one guard who was here for many years; let's not lose Garner too!

Thank you.

Kay Adams

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July 4, 2010

Dear Editor,

My name is Seferino; I recently bought a unit in March with my girlfriend, Jessica. One of the reasons that we bought our unit was the security we have felt and received from Garner Bluhm.

When we asked questions in reference to the property from our real estate agent as terms of security, we were answered honestly. We also had the opportunity to meet with Garner while looking at several properties. We liked the fact that he knows everything that's going on with all of the residents. He strives to make sure that we have a safe and secure environment to live in.

My parents lived in the community for 2 years before we chose to purchase our unit and each time we came over for a visit, Garner took time out of his day to greet us.

In our opinions, we think that Mrs. Byrd was out of line at the meeting that night. In all of the other places that I have ever lived in the past, I feel very safe and secure living here knowing that Garner will be around the corner on the golf cart, making sure each of the residents within Forrest Lake has a very hard-working and dedicated officer on the job.

Thank you,

*Seferino Longoria*

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July 4, 2010

Dear Forrest Lake Townhome Editor:

I have recognized security guard (Garner's) service toward our community. This letter is a letter of recognition from Unit 100 notifying that we really appreciate and feel comfortable under Mr. Garner's protection.

Carla Covazos

July 6, 2010

Dear Editor,

Let me first thank you for the time and effort you give to this newsletter which allows us this open forum for communication. As a supervisor at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, I know the full value of communication in the resolution of issues that concern all the people involved. There are a few topics I would like to address and they are as follows:

1. The Board of Directors should be thanked and commended for the service they donate and the 'open book' attitude in the documentation of monies spent. While it is true that there have been some actions taken over time that I might not have agreed with, in light of the results we have seen here I cannot say my ideas would have better results. As a whole, over the 11 years I have lived in this community, they have done an excellent job of protecting our investment in our homes. As this board was elected by a majority vote, it is fair to say the majority of owners agree. Those who do not are welcome to run for the position in the next election and explain to everyone in detail how they will do the job better.

2. Security is an on-going concern, and will continue to be as Houston grows. The service we have seen in the current arrangement has been exceptional and I am well pleased with this 'as is'. I would like to state for all to hear that I believe it is in our best interest to keep security as a contracted service rather than in house, first because of 'call-ins' - those times when a person can't make it to work. At that point, the company contracted is responsible to provide trained and qualified replacement for the shift in question, and second from the aspect of liability. We have an excellent service at what I think is a reasonable cost. If any think it should be up-graded, stand ready to see the maintenance fee increase to cover the additional cost.

3. Maintenance is an issue that I can address with some authority as I am the supervisor for the Plumbing Maintenance shop at M.D. Anderson, Main Campus. That consist of 2 in-patient hospitals and approx 50 outpatient clinics. I have held a Master Plumbing license in Oklahoma and Texas, and too many certifications in the mechanical trades to name here. That said, I can honestly say that our Maintenance at Forrest Lake is being run better than

I could perform in that same position. The records that have been kept, the tracking of service calls and repairs, the assignment and completion of work orders and the 'above and beyond' service we get from our employees sets a standard that I have yet to achieve at the #1 cancer treatment center in the world. We also need to set the record straight about cost. The cost of a service contract will be approx \$75.00 an hour - PER MAN! Of course, we only pay that when they are on site (AND travel time to the job - AND 2 hour minimum per call - AND equipment rental + mark up - AND cost of supplies + mark up). While we are adding, let's remember to add in damages to homes and grounds while we wait for them to show up at 9:00AM on Tuesday as the water continues to flow, or the office and clubhouse sweat in the heat and humidity of an A/C failure. This is NOT an opinion, this is a direct observation, with 35 years of experience as a tradesman. If we go to contracted maintenance, you can expect a \$500.00 maintenance fee within 12 months to cover the additional expense for less service. This is an issue that I will be glad to discuss in an open forum any time with any one. We are very fortunate to have the employees we have and I think I can document that having 'in-house' maintenance not only provides a cost savings but improved service as well.

Please extend a heartfelt 'Thank You and Well Done' to those mentioned above.

Franklin L. White

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July 9, 2010

Dear Editor:

I would like to address the letters printed in the past newsletter. To address the two concerning the maintenance people and the board, I am constantly appalled at how some residents who live here spout out things that they seem to know nothing about. For example, the paint our boys use is water based so therefore it doesn't kill grass.

By the way, we don't invest \$300/month to keep the landscaping nice; we pay \$300/month for everything, water, electricity, landscaping, exterior buildings, roofs, maintenance of all types, employees, etc. This property is old and needs much up keep and I think that the board and our boys do a

great job. Remember this property is 22 acres and needs many routine things done to it on the buildings, and elsewhere. As for as a resident paying \$80 to repair damages due to the hurricane and the freeze, there were some of us who worked hard , pitched in to get debris off the property so that the landscaper could pick it up more efficiently. By doing this, the landscaper did not charge us near as much. Caring residents do things like that. Many of us were hit by the hurricane and the freeze and had to replace plants. That resident should be glad that he only paid \$80. Was this supposed to be the board's fault? Perhaps this person would have liked the board to have assessed all of us for damages due to the hurricane ..At least Earline, Ken, and the rest of the board found ways to pay for damages within their existing budgets. This could not have been easy. Whisper Walk, the property behind us, did assess their residents. For those people who think the board is not looking out for us, they are so wrong,

If you think that Earline, Ken, and the rest of the board don't know how to take care of our finances and operation of the property, then who could do a better job? That would be scary for me to think about because no one I know of has the experience and expertise that they do. One of the reasons that Earline and Ken have been on the board for so long is that they have the knowledge and expertise needed to run this property. It would take another a long time to even gain a quarter of their knowledge.

I'm not sure what was meant by "Propaganda". The only thing I've ever read in the newsletter was the "Truth". What "Rhetoric" was written by Earline? She has always stated the "Truth". Now if you don't want to hear it, then that's your problem. What was the comment about a conflict of interest between the maintenance crew and security? One doesn't have anything to do with the other. Comments like this make no sense and seem to be said to incite strife within the community and are unfounded or based on untruths, inferences, or just an uneducated mind set.

A resident stated that he didn't have irrigation in his courtyard. There are many courtyards that don't have irrigation systems. Now if you want our maintenance fee to go up or an assessment be leveraged, then I guess the board can get irrigation systems for the whole property. Would this make the resident happy? These systems are expensive and the board has managed to place some in areas where they were needed and I think they will install more, but it takes time and money.

The same resident was also accusing the board of not responding to his Email. I heard that they did respond; however, his system wasn't working. See how things get out portrayed or twisted?

As for the letter concerning the meeting, was that resident at the same meeting that I was? I did not hear Ken bullying anyone. He did respond to two residents who had appeared to come to the meeting with anger and their own agendas. It was stated in the beginning that this meeting was not a formal meeting, but it was residents who set an angry tone, not the board. The reason the board had the meeting to begin with was to let people air their feelings and to dispel rumors in a civil way. Mr. Elswick did come in and settle things down which was good. I know he did make this resident mad, but he is not a board member; so don't blame the board for bullying, talking down to the residents or even reprimanding residents. Just because everything wasn't solved in one night doesn't mean that the meeting wasn't worth it.

Too often I think residents build up resentments over time, don't say or do anything about it, and then they spill their angers out all at once. As I said at the meeting, I acknowledged many who were in attendance, but I thought it strange that it was the first time I'd ever seen them at a meeting. If residents don't come to meetings, how could they possibly know what is a truth unless they ask the board which I don't think they do, and it was obvious. Why don't residents ask questions and get educated before they go off half cocked? The board has always answered any questions they could when asked.

To the resident who recommended that the office manager stay later or on work on Saturdays, well "Been There, Did That". No one came!!! That is old news, but why didn't she know? There were also comments about the office manager and the number of people we have in maintenance. These residents don't know what they even do or else they wouldn't make such ridiculous comments. It's totally ridiculous how some were questioning the board's ability to handle our affairs like they're trying to second guess them. Why did they vote for them to begin with, if they even

voted at all? If they think they can do a better job, then run. I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to vote for any of them because it appears that they wouldn't have the experience or expertise needed for the jobs. By the way, I didn't read any suggestions or alternatives brought forth to remedy things brought forth by these residents. I suggest they present their ideas to the board, or perhaps they don't have any because they are speaking with uneducated minds regarding certain facts.

It struck me that no one wants to pay a higher maintenance fee but some suggest that we outsource the office manager's job. What will that cost? None of our employees make a lot of money or get great benefits; this issue came up before. This is another example of people not knowing the facts before they speak. Our maintenance people have longevity, experience, and they care for the property. I'm surprised they have stayed as long as they have with the pay and limited benefits we do give them. How ridiculous is it that we cut back!!! These same residents would be angered because they can't get things done. I was taken back by one letter suggesting that we may not need a maintenance supervisor. He is the one who knows how to fix everything, schedules everything, and has everything down in writing as to what was done, being done, and needs to be done. He has operated like this for years. One resident who formerly ran for the board said that contract labor should be considered, but then he retracted this idea, thank goodness! Let's start getting out our wallets then. This board and our maintenance people have saved us money big time but some residents don't get it because they don't know what they are talking about.

I didn't understand the contradictory statement made in that letter about getting new people to come in with new ideas that would help our community just as efficiently as this current regime. If the current regime is so efficient, then what's the talk about? We've had other boards and in my opinion, this is the best one we've ever had.

The board are residents themselves, and doesn't want to pay more money for maintenance fees. Guess what! Down the road fees will probably have to go up just like many things (gasoline, groceries, insurance, taxes, electricity, water, etc.) have gone up.

I didn't understand why there was so much to do about Wayne. Evidently his company decided to make a change and due to confidentiality, we can't know details - so leave it alone. I liked Wayne too, but things happen. At least we still have Garner who has been nice, helpful, and friendly to all who has bothered to get to know him. If any one has complaints, go to the board; don't have private meetings at houses or on the bridge.

Concerning security, we don't like to have to pay for security and at a time we didn't have to. It's a new era and what price do we place on our safety? I thought it was ridiculous when a resident at the meeting stated that the guards made that much money. Again, they don't know what they are talking about. They need to do the math if they can. Being a contract person myself, I sure don't get the money my company gets.

As for the resident who was telling others how much we pay for security and other information, I'd like to know how she knows. Is ABM breaking confidentiality and telling employees about clients and other employees? ABM says no, but it continues. It is disturbing to me how rumors are spread on hearsay and inferences. Please stop and think, get educated, and then if you have a valid complaint take it to the appropriate people -- the board.

One of my last thoughts is to caution everyone when new candidates put flyers out or go door to door. We need to evaluate their experience, expertise and whether or not they have educated themselves about the difference between truth and rumors being spread for political gains.

*Debbie Magaña*

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July 12, 2010

To Ron Watts and Virginia Lee:

Hello, we are homeowners and residents here at Forrest Lake. We have been here for five years.

We pay \$300.00 a month on our Association Fee when it was \$275 a month.

For anyone to think that we need a contract company to come in here and start running things is redundant.

As Homeowners here at Forrest Lake, we do not need a reduction of costs when it comes to maintenance.

We need it for the place to stay clean and look nice, also when it comes to the security around here, we do need it. Garner does an outstanding job with the security here. We have never had any problems or break-ins.

When we leave for work or going out of town, we can feel safe and confident that Garner will do his job and protect our property.

When someone comes by to visit the residents, Garner will call to verify that person is going to that resident's place.

I don't understand why some homeowners feel that we need a contract company running things. If we need to cut, it should be in the area of insurance. We can save money in that area. Why can't the employees pay half on their insurance?

Neither maintenance nor security needs to be cut.

Garner does a fantastic job, as homeowners, we want to keep him for our security guard. Once again, we do not want a contract company. Also, Ron Watts, we tried three security guards in the past and it did not work out.

Yours truly,
Angela, Hollis & Mark Demby

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July 12, 2010

Forrest Lake Residents:

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the open forum meeting on May 27, 2010, but I have certainly heard about it from others in the community. It seems that the big complaints were security, maintenance and monthly maintenance fees. I personally think our security is great – if a personnel change had to be made there were obviously reasons why, but we need consistent guards, who know the residents and care about Forrest Lake, not the minimum wage guy.

Several years back the Board tried 3 guards on 8 hr shifts and it didn't work out – may have cost a little less, but quality of guards was certainly missing. Most of us living here want good security and the complex grounds looking good – well folks that takes money!!

Here are some points to consider:

- How do you know you are paying too much for security? Have you checked prices else where? Officer Garner has stopped an armed robbery and provided info to police and suspects were apprehended, stopped a burglary in progress, saved a lady's life, called maintenance personnel after hours to fix pool pump, helped family of a deceased resident and he also worked 3 days straight after Ike, not even leaving to check on his place. Now would you rather have the minimum wage guy or someone who cares?
- Someone is commenting about wages paid to guards and the times they work – where would this person get such information?
- Someone else is saying the guards spend too much time at a Board member's house – over 3 hrs with blinds closed (by the way BOD does not have blinds) - remember they do need to report about activity in the complex.
- Someone else is saying they feel threatened by a certain guard, yet they follow that guard around in their car straight to a BOD house.
- Someone else is taking pictures of different situations they feel are inappropriate – we all need to be adults around here and talk to people directly instead of complaining all the time and spreading rumors when you don't have all the facts.
- Someone else says get rid of some of the maintenance personnel, yet complain that things don't get done fast enough. Where would we have been after Ike if our guys

had not worked so hard! Remember we have never had an assessment, but Whisper Walk and other complexes have had one to put on new roofs and other maintenance. (That is why we have a roofing fund and, by the way, materials go up every year.) Sometimes our maintenance guys are called in "after hours" due to an emergency. The same maintenance personnel should be a comfort to all of us – they watch out for intruders as well and are very trustworthy and hardworking.

- Others have complained about paying for medical insurance for personnel – what is provided is the bare minimum according to what I have been told by Maintenance people.
- Remember that City of Houston water rates have gone up and that includes us. Comcast would be a lot higher if you were paying it individually as would our garbage service. A single contract for 243 units is way cheaper than billing people individually for such items.

It is time to look at some facts, not all the rumors that are floating around. We have a great complex here and should be thankful that our Free Board runs this place like a business and is always looking for ways to cut expenses.

*Jerry and Ann Reinsch*

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July 13, 2010

I would like to thank all of you that have been praying for my stepson, Bob Bird. He died of stomach cancer. Please keep his wife and two sons, and his sister, Vickie in your prayers.

Mary Bird

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July 17, 2010

To Forrest Lake Board Members & Residents;

My spouse and I have resided in Forrest Lake Townhomes for quite a few years. In the last Newsletter there was conversation regarding budget and using a less expensive security company. I realize budget is necessary, but when it comes to all of our residents' safety and security, I am very concerned. Using a less expensive agency could compromise our safety. If need be, cut cost elsewhere. We live in a crime and drug-ridden area as soon as you exit Lumberdale. We have very little crime, if any.

Garner is an outstanding security officer. When he is on duty, I feel safe. He knows where each resident lives and who belongs in our community. He is very kind and on top of his job. Garner takes his job seriously and keeps a watchful eye on everything here. If I return home late a night, he is close by to see that I get in my gate safely. I know he does this for me, my neighbor, and others. A few years ago, he saved a resident being robbed at gun point.

I urge each of you to consider safety over cost. When you pay less for a service, you usually get what you pay for. In the past we had security officers sleeping on the job. Needless to say, that's no protection for the residents. In my opinion this needs to be taken seriously and this is one area we can't afford to compromise.

Sincerely,  
*Donna Boswell*

~~~~~

July 17, 2010

Dear Editor,

I would like to say that Garner, the security man, is doing a good job. He is always around the complex and always stops to question any visitors who enter the complex without permission.

Thanks!
D. Hammond

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July 18, 2010

Dear Forrest Lake Residents,

My name is Billie Morales and I've been a Forrest Lake resident since 1975. Over the years, our community has struggled to maintain a wonderful and serene presence all the while being in VERY close proximity to apartment complexes who house some people who commit various crimes such as murder, rape and theft. Through proper planning, the Forrest Lake Board of Directors has been successful in keeping most of those crimes out of our community and for that I commend them. Therefore, I am very disappointed in the few "newcomers" in our community who wish to slew hateful and slanderous words against the very people who help our community and investment stay sound. It's obvious the 2 or 3 people who wish to replace the current board members have a hidden agenda that involves a personal dislike for the hardworking individuals (FL Board, Security and Maintenance) involved in helping FL maintain its beauty. If these new people are elected, make no mistake, our community will in a matter of time look EXACTLY like the apartments down the street. They don't have an interest in the community and would much rather focus on personal dislikes and vendettas as opposed to working together for the good of our community. Let's come together as a community and send a message loud & clear! We don't want our community to look like the apartments next door and we all know that's what will happen if these people are elected.

Forrest Lake Resident since the beginning,  
*Billie Morales*

## Q and A to the Board:

**Q:** Once again, there are cars being parked in our circle long term....the red card, with handicap tags, has been parked in front of my house for more than a week now....

Could you please have security check on this....

And I would like to request that the by-law about parking be printed in the next newsletter....

Thank you.

*Rose McGill*

**A:** Dear Rose:

Where cars are parked on FL private streets for extended periods, we follow the City of Houston regulations for similar extended parking on public streets. These restrictions state that a vehicle may not be parked on a public street in the same location for more than 24 hours without being moved. Unfortunately, the City regulations do not say how much of a "move " is acceptable, and some of the more savvy longtime parkers know that by moving their car as little as 12 inches forward or back than they can still meet the City requirements, as written.

Our instructions to FL security officers are: If a vehicle appears to have remained unmoved on a FL private road for more than 24 hours then they put a warning ticket on it. If the vehicle is still there 24 hours later then a second warning ticket goes on it. If it is still there the following day, with still no apparent movement, we then consider it abandoned and will have it towed. I spoke with the FL night security officer this afternoon (July 8) and he confirmed that he had already ticketed the offending vehicle. He will now place a second ticket on it and if it still there, on the same location, and unmoved, on Friday night then he will, with my approval, have it towed.

I am so sorry that we have to go through this somewhat lengthy procedure but unless a vehicle is parked in a fire lane or causing an obstruction then we have to follow the steps I have described to avoid any liability issues.

*Ken Barker*

### Submissions for Q & A

Residents are encouraged to submit questions about matters concerning Forrest Lake and the Board member responsible for that matter will respond in the newsletter. So few people attend the Town Hall meetings that responses to community questions only get circulated by word of mouth and sometimes are misinterpreted. Please send your questions by e-mail to [FLNewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:FLNewsletter@yahoo.com) or you may place them in the suggestion box in the mailroom or drop them by the office and Cheryl will forward them to the Board.



### Kudos to Rose McGill

...for being a good neighbor and being persistent about sending information/complaints to the City of Houston about matters that affect Forrest Lake. We need more like her.

One morning at 7:30 Rose saw a dead dog on Antoine and reported it to the City and asked for it to be removed. Several hours later, she saw that it had not been removed and sent the following letter to the City of Houston:

This AM at 7:30, I reported a dead dog in the road on Antoine just north of Pinemont....here it is 1:30 PM, in 90 plus degree weather, and the dog is still there...someone has moved the dog from the center of the road to the grass in the middle of the road....I would like to have the dog picked up....

With the current weather conditions I am sure that this is/will create a health hazard....

I am a property and sales tax payer and would like to see city services pick up the DEAD DOG....

Thank you.  
*Rose McGill*

### Peer Pressure

by Charles R. Swindoll

Once a spider built a beautiful web in an old house. He kept it clean and shiny so that flies would patronize it. The minute he got a "customer" he would clean up after him so the other flies would not get suspicious.

Then one day this fairly intelligent fly came buzzing by the clean spider web. Old man spider called out, "Come in and sit." But the fairly intelligent fly said, "No sir, I don't see other flies in your house, and I am not going in alone!"

Presently the fly saw on the floor below him a large crowd of flies dancing around on a piece of brown paper. He was delighted! He was not afraid if lots of flies were doing it. So he came in for a landing.

Just before he landed, a bee zoomed by, saying, "Don't land there, stupid. That's flypaper!" But the fairly intelligent fly shouted back, "Don't be silly. Those flies are dancing. There's a big crowd there. Everybody's doing it. That many flies can't be wrong. Some of us want to be in the crowd so badly we end up in a mess because we didn't listen or search out a situation.

*What does it profit a fly (or a person) if he escapes the web only to end up in the glue?*

## Cut Your Electric Bills Painlessly

(copied from an internet article – pw)

A few simple tricks can save you a bundle:

### Plug ins

- Look for those electronic devices, especially those with digital time and date displays that are infrequently used such as alarm clocks, TVs and VCRs in a guest room and unplug them.
- Unplug devices used to recharge electronics/batteries when they're not being used.
- Transformers consume energy. Consider unplugging devices like calculators that are not in use.

### Appliances

- Wait until you can fill up your dishwasher before running it. And if you have a heated-dry option, switch it off. Prop open the door a bit after the cycle to air dry your load.
- If you have an electric cooktop, turn the burners off a few minutes before the allotted cooking time. The heating element will stay hot long enough to finish the cooking without using more electricity.

### Refrigerator

- Refrigerators use more power than any other appliance in the home and deserve special attention. Although rushing out to buy a new refrigerator may not be in your budget, it is important to know that new models are more efficient and use as little as half the electricity of older units.
- Full refrigerators run more efficiently than ones that are only partially full. So buy more food and save some energy.
- If you have two refrigerators, or an additional freezer, decide if the extra expense is really worth it. Cram as much as you can into your primary refrigerator or consider disposing of two older refrigerators and replacing them with one larger, newer and more efficient model.
- Make sure the refrigerator door seals are tight. Test them by closing the door over a piece of paper or a dollar bill so it is half in and half out of the refrigerator. If you can pull the paper or bill out easily, the latch may need adjustment or the seal may need replacing.
- Place food and liquids in airtight containers. Uncovered foods release moisture and make the compressor work harder.
- Move the refrigerator away from the wall and vacuum its condenser coils yearly unless you have a no-clean condenser model. Refrigerators will run for shorter periods with clean coils.
- Maintain a consistent temperature in the refrigerator and freezer. Recommended temperatures are 37 to 40F for the fresh food compartment of the refrigerator and 5F for the freezer section. If you have a separate freezer for long-term storage, it should be kept at 0F.

### Lighting

- It's obvious, but true: Turn off lights that are not being used. Consider installing timers or photo cells on some lights. And instead of constantly nagging the kids, try occupancy sensors that turn on and off automatically when someone enters or leaves a room.
- Rather than brightly lighting an entire room, focus the light where you need it. For example, use fluorescent under-cabinet lighting for kitchen sinks and countertops
- Consider dimmer switches and three-way lamps. These provide low light levels when bright lights are not necessary.
- Use linear fluorescent and energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) in fixtures throughout your home to provide high-quality and high-efficiency lighting. Fluorescent lamps are much more efficient than incandescent bulbs and last six to ten times

longer. Although fluorescent and compact fluorescent lamps are more expensive than incandescent bulbs, they pay for themselves by saving energy over their lifetime.

## Take Your Keys to Bed!

Shared by Stephanie Rush

Put your car keys beside your bed at night.

Tell your spouse, your children, your neighbors, your parents, your Dr's office, the check-out girl at the market, everyone you run across. Put your car keys beside your bed at night.

If you hear a noise outside your home or someone trying to get in your house, just press the panic button for your car. The alarm will be set off, and the horn will continue to sound until either you turn it off or the car battery dies.

This tip came from a neighborhood watch coordinator. Next time you come home for the night and you start to put your keys away, think of this: It's a security alarm system that you probably already have and requires no installation. Test it. It will go off from most everywhere inside your house and will keep honking until your battery runs down or until you reset it with the button on the key fob chain. It works if you park in your driveway or garage.

If your car alarm goes off when someone is trying to break into your house, odds are the burglar/rapist won't stick around. After a few seconds, all the neighbors will be looking out their windows to see who is out there and sure enough the criminal won't want that. And remember to carry your keys while walking to your car in a parking lot. The alarm can work the same way there. This is something that should really be shared with everyone. Maybe it could save a life or a sexual abuse crime. This would also be useful for any emergency, such as a heart attack, where you can't reach a phone.

## For Safety's Sake.....

- Gangs and thieves are now plotting different ways to get a person to "stop" their vehicle. There is a gang initiation reported by the local police department that gangs are placing a car seat by the road...with a fake baby in it...waiting for a woman, of course, to stop and check on the baby. Note that the location of this car seat will usually be beside a wooded or grassy (field) area ...and the person - woman - will be dragged into the woods- beaten and raped- usually left for dead. do not stop. dial 9-1-1 and report what you saw.  
<http://www.snopes.com/crime/gangs/carseat.asp>
- If you are driving at night and eggs are thrown at your windshield, do not operate the wiper and do not spray any water because eggs mixed with water become milky and block your vision up to 92.5% you are then forced to stop beside the road and become a victim of thieves. This is a new technique used by gangs.  
<http://www.snopes.com/crime/warnings/eggthrow.asp>

These are desperate times and these unsavory individuals will take desperate measures to get what they want.

### Your Texas Drivers License

Something all Texans should know -- Your Texas driver's license has a phone number on the back, just above the bar code on the lower left side: 1-800-525-5555. (It's in VERY SMALL PRINT, but it IS there.) This number can be called for emergency assistance on the highway or wherever you might have trouble while in your car. A service truck will be sent to you. This service is state operated and paid for with your tax dollars. If you are ever stranded, just call the number on your driver's license...help is on the way. A state trooper will be sent to make sure all is well.